



COLUSA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

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August 31, 2000

Dear Colusa County Resident:

The Colusa County Children and Families Commission has developed a countywide plan to show how tobacco tax revenues received by the County and other resources should be used to improve the lives of children from the prenatal stage to age five, as well as to support the needs of families with young children. Attached is a summary of the plan; the full plan is a longer and more detailed document that is also available for public review at the locations noted on the last page of the attached summary.

Your input to the strategic plan for early childhood development is very important. To obtain more input from parents and other interested members of the community, we are holding a public hearing on Tuesday, September 12, 2000 from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. The hearing will be held in the theatre of the Colusa Unified School District, 745 10th Street, Colusa. On-site child care (with trained child care providers who have passed background checks), snacks, and a Spanish interpreter will be provided at the meeting.

Please plan to attend the meeting to voice your opinions. If you cannot make the public hearing, we would welcome your written comments sent to the address at the top of this letter, or comments can be submitted electronically through the Commission's web site at <http://www.ccfc.ca.gov/colusa>. We look forward to your feedback on the proposed strategic plan.

Sincerely,

The Members of the Colusa County Children and Families Commission

Colusa County Children and Families Commission
Strategic Plan For Early Childhood Development
August 2000

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1998, the California Children and Families Act (also known as Proposition 10) was enacted, increasing taxes on tobacco products in order to provide the funds to create a comprehensive and integrated delivery system of information and services to promote early childhood development from prenatal to age 5, as well as to support the needs of parents of young children. The ultimate goal is to enhance the early growth experiences of children, enabling them to be more successful in school and to give them a better opportunity to succeed in life.

Almost \$700 million per year is being raised statewide through the tobacco tax. 80% of these funds are then allocated to the 58 counties of the state according to the live birth rate of each county. The remaining 20% of the money is directed to statewide programs, research, and media campaigns. Colusa County will receive approximately \$320,000 a year from these funds. In order to access these monies, the county must adopt a strategic plan that shows how Proposition 10 funding will be used to promote a comprehensive and integrated system of early childhood development services.

The Colusa County Children and Families Commission (referred to as simply “the Commission” throughout) was created in 1999 to evaluate the current and projected needs of young children and their families, develop a strategic plan that describes how the community needs will be addressed, determine how to expend local monies available from the state Children and Families Trust Fund, and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and activities funded in accordance with the strategic plan. The mission of the Commission is:

The Colusa County Children and Families Commission is committed to enhancing the lives of all children prenatal to age five and their families through a countywide, comprehensive, integrated system of early childhood development.

The vision of the kind of future the Commission is working to create is:

We envision an era when all children in Colusa County spend their early childhood years in positive surroundings that help them to reach their full potential. Children are born healthy and enjoy happy lives in supportive, nurturing and loving environments. They are healthy, resilient, well-adjusted, and ready to learn when they reach kindergarten. Their journey through childhood is enhanced by parents and caregivers that are informed, capable, and confident in their ability to guide children toward becoming productive members of society.

This document summarizes the first strategic plan for Colusa County, culminating eight months of work by many dedicated members of the community. A total of 20 public meetings were held throughout the planning process, welcoming input and involvement from all members of the community that wished to participate. The planning process consisted of three phases:

1. ***Assessment of Community Needs and Assets.*** This phase defined the needs of children prenatal to age five and their parents, the services and other community assets currently available to address those needs, gaps between needs and resources, and the desires of parents regarding what the Commission could do to best support their young children. Town meetings were held in Colusa, Williams, Maxwell, Arbuckle and Grimes to get ideas directly from parents. A survey of parents, a separate survey of service providers, and compilation of pre-existing reports and studies supplemented the information from the town meetings.
2. ***Strategic Plan Development.*** In this phase, a series of decisions were made regarding what specific goals (results) are sought for the County, how those goals will be achieved, how progress will be evaluated, and how funds will be expended. Over 40 parents and service providers participated on an Advisory Council to help formulate the strategies or specific actions to be taken during the next two years. The output of this phase was a first draft of a comprehensive, countywide strategic plan for early childhood development and this related summary document.
3. ***Public Review and Submission.*** The draft strategic plan is being made available to the public in printed form and through the Commission's web site. A public hearing will be held on September 12th to gather input from the community on the proposed plan. The Commission will amend the plan based on the public input and will adopt a final version that will be submitted to the state-level California Children and Families Commission as required by law.

As noted earlier, activities sponsored with Proposition 10 funds must focus specifically on children prenatal to age 5 and their families. Further, according to state level guidelines that have been established, four strategic results should be pursued:

1. **Improved Family Functioning: Strong Families.** Successful and strong families are those who are able to provide for the physical, mental and emotional development of their children. Parents and caregivers provide the foundation for a child's ability to create successful relationships, solve problems and carry out responsibilities. Methods of improving child development therefore must start with parents and families.
2. **Improved Child Development: Children Learning and Ready for School.** The importance of preparing children to succeed in school is critical. The role of education in a child's later ability to create a healthy, fulfilling life has been well documented. Skills that allow one to problem solve and think creatively are developed in early childhood education settings and nurtured through community and parental reinforcement. The National Association of Elementary School Principals has stated that "better childhoods" would be the single greatest contributor to improvement in school achievement.

3. **Improved Child Health: Healthy Children.** Children who are healthy in mind, body and spirit grow up confident on their ability to live a fulfilling, productive life. Healthy children have sufficient nutrition, health care, nurturing and guidance. The research on child development and the impact of the early years emphasizes the importance of children beginning life with healthy nutrition and healthy environments.
4. **Improved Systems: Integrated, Consumer-Oriented, Accessible Services.** Many parents and caregivers with young children have difficulty in accessing existing forms of assistance, much less being able to learn about and utilize new services that are introduced. Proposition 10 therefore included a mandate that strategic plans created by Children and Families Commissions must show how the county will promote integration, linkage and coordination among programs, service providers, revenue resources, professionals, community organizations and residents. Further, services must be available in a culturally competent manner, embracing the differences in cultures and languages within the county.

These four strategic results served as the initial basis for Colusa County's strategic planning. Within each of these four areas, the planning process identified nine long-range goals that will be pursued to enhance the early growth experiences of children over the next five to ten years. For each goal, short-term objectives were developed to show what results would be sought during the next two years, along with a set of strategies or actions to be implemented in order to achieve each objective. An abbreviated format of the strategic results, goals, objectives and strategies is contained in the table below. It should be noted that many strategies will have a positive impact on multiple objectives, not just the objective where the strategy is listed.

Goals	Objectives	Strategies
STRATEGIC RESULT 1. IMPROVED FAMILY FUNCTIONING: STRONG FAMILIES		
1.1 Parents and other caregivers are prepared and supported to fulfill their roles in developing healthy, happy, resilient and well-adjusted children.	1.1.1 Promote community-based, accessible parent education. "Community-based" means that services are available in or near each community in the county. "Accessible" includes education during hours and in languages that enable parents and caregivers to use the services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide home visitation and in-home support for parents • Provide incentives and transportation to increase attendance at parent education programs • Offer special programs and incentives to involve dads in parenting • Offer workshops on individual parenting topics that supplement the various parenting classes already in existence • Involve grandparents, surrogate parents and other caregivers in parent support

Goals	Objectives	Strategies
1.2 Whole communities demonstrate a strong commitment to the well-being of children and families by working together to promote and support parental involvement and cooperation. This goal explicitly seeks cross-cultural involvement and cooperation.	<p>1.2.1 Develop playgroups or other forums in each community that enable parents to support each other.</p> <p>1.2.2 Expand the number of public areas with age-appropriate play equipment for children age 0-5 in each community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide assistance in forming and/or sustaining play groups, parent co-ops and other such forums • Enhance library-based programs to offer family activities and parent support • Involve churches in sponsoring family activities and parent support forums • Add/upgrade age-appropriate play equipment in existing community parks and public recreation areas for children ages 0-5
<p align="center">STRATEGIC RESULT 2. IMPROVED CHILD DEVELOPMENT: CHILDREN LEARNING AND READY FOR SCHOOL</p>		
2.1 Children live in safe, nurturing environments. "Living environments" include all places where children spend a significant amount of time, such as homes and child care settings.	2.1.1 Increase the knowledge and skill of caretakers on nurturing and safety. "Caretakers" includes the full spectrum of parents, grandparents, guardians, child care providers, neighbors, and others that may be caring for children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer bilingual parenting programs in all communities, using the strategies listed under Strategic Result 1, Objective 1.1.1 • Provide specialized training on nurturing and safety to professionals that work with parents and young children • Develop a media campaign to reach all adults on nurturing and safety issues
2.2 Children live in environments that meet their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development needs.	<p>2.2.1 Increase the knowledge and skill of caretakers on cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development needs. This should include understanding of child development at different ages, and also honor the role of the parent as the primary caregiver and role model.</p> <p>2.2.2 Increase access to quality preschools for all children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use mobile classrooms to go into the local communities to perform early screening and assessments • Engage the entire family in literacy efforts and education of young children • Distribute a "gift pack" of quality books for pre-kindergarten children • Provide specialized training to professionals on early childhood development • Blend state preschool and Head Start in each town • Set up satellite preschool sites with universal access

Goals	Objectives	Strategies
<u>STRATEGIC RESULT 3. IMPROVED CHILD HEALTH: HEALTHY CHILDREN</u>		
3.1 All children are born with the best possible physical health at birth.	3.1.1 Increase early access to adequate prenatal health care for pregnant women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use WIC visits to provide educational information about healthy pregnancies • Provide home visits by nurses to pregnant women • Increase the number of medical providers, including mid-level providers • Support existing medical and dental services in order to keep services in the County • Sponsor a vehicle dedicated to transporting families to medical, dental and other family service appointments • Expand use and promotion of travel vouchers to get families to preventative and diagnostic care appointments
3.2 Children remain healthy during their formative years from birth to age 5.	3.2.1 Increase access to medical and dental care for children age 0-5. 3.2.2 Increase the knowledge and skill of parents regarding child health.	All of the strategies listed for the previous objective are intended to also address this objective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use WIC visits to provide educational information about child health • Provide home visits by nurses to families with children
<u>STRATEGIC RESULT 4. IMPROVED SYSTEMS: INTEGRATED, CONSUMER-ORIENTED, ACCESSIBLE SERVICES</u>		
4.1 People are able to access available services.	4.1.1 Increase public knowledge about resources that are available and how to access those resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add information about local resources to the Kit for New Parents being developed by the State Children & Families Commission and widely distribute the kit • Provide a resource guide in the phone book • Conduct a media campaign to provide information on resources / services • Collaborate with schools, service providers and local businesses to educate them about available resources

Goals	Objectives	Strategies
4.1 People are able to access available services (continued)	4.1.2 Increase the ability for people to physically reach available resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide transit vouchers to remove cost as a barrier to using public transportation • Sponsor a vehicle dedicated to transporting families to medical, dental and other family service appointments
4.2 Services are culturally and linguistically sensitive and appropriate.	4.2.1 Increase the knowledge and skill of service providers regarding cultural competence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training, support and technical assistance to service providers on customer care and cultural sensitivity • Add bilingual capabilities to selected services, such as the transit system, where Spanish-speaking people have the greatest language barriers
4.3 Families experience effective coordination and communication between services they access.	4.3.1 Establish the systems and infrastructure needed to allow service providers to regularly share information and coordinate planning efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct regular coordinating meetings with all local service providers to assess the progress of implementing strategies, share information, and coordinate planning work • Develop and maintain a web site with complete information about local services where service providers can post information about meetings, changes in services, etc.

The intent is for this plan to serve as a comprehensive strategic plan for early childhood development services, not just a "Proposition 10" plan. The efforts of many service providers and community groups must be coordinated in order to implement the plan.

The Commission is committed to ensuring that the greatest possible benefit is realized for young children and their families through the use of money allocated to Colusa County because of Proposition 10. Funds will be allocated to various strategies and service providers once a year. Due to the limited amount of funding available and the presence of relatively few service providers in the county, the Commission may not conduct a formal competitive bid or Request For Proposal (RFP) process. Instead, the Commission intends to work collaboratively with the various service providers in the County to match funds, coordinate budget decisions, and ultimately use Proposition 10 funding to fill gaps where no other sources of funding are available to support a high priority service or project.

The strategic plan also provides for regular evaluations of results so that the Colusa County Children and Families Commission and community stakeholders can assess the degree of progress made toward achieving the goals and objectives described in the plan as well as assess the effectiveness of funding allocation decisions. Two levels of evaluation will be performed: *strategic evaluation* to assess countywide progress and achievement of the strategic goals and objectives, and *program evaluation* to assess the performance of individual programs and services.

Early childhood development lays the foundation for adult life, serving as the basis for children to become well-adjusted, productive citizens. There is a compelling need in Colusa County to create and implement a comprehensive, collaborative, and integrated system of information and services to promote, support, and optimize early childhood development from the prenatal stage to five years of age. This strategic plan represents the first step toward a long-range effort to establish such a system. Through the wise investment of Proposition 10 funds and dedicated partnership between the Commission, service providers, parents and other community groups, it is possible to create an environment where all children in Colusa County are healthy, happy, and able to spend their early childhood years in positive surroundings that help them to reach their full potential.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Copies of the entire strategic plan are available throughout the county at the following locations: public libraries, Head Start classrooms and day care centers, School District offices, WIC office, Children's Services office, Chambers of Commerce, Public Health and other medical offices, Special Education office, and other public offices. The complete strategic plan document provides extensive information on each of the topics covered in this summary.
- The strategic plan is available in electronic form on the Commission's web site at <http://www.cafc.ca.gov/colusa>. Other information about the Commission's efforts to serve the community can be found on the web site, along with minutes of all meetings held this year. The web site also contains an area where you can post comments and suggestions for the Commission to receive.
- Attend the public hearing on the strategic plan and voice your opinions! The hearing will be held at the following time and place:

When Tuesday, September 12, 2000 from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Where Colusa Unified School District
745 10th Street, Colusa